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# Management of Local Government

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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLOR

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## CHAPTER X

### Conclusions

#### PART 1: CHARACTERISTICS AND RECRUITMENT OF COUNCILLORS

##### How representative is local government ?

Local government is concerned, not only with the wider issues of state, but with more immediate local responsibilities. It seems unlikely that such responsibilities can be effectively discharged unless people with first-hand knowledge of all sections of the local community are represented on the council. We have, therefore, compared our councillors with the population. We find that in some respects councillors differ very widely from the population. Councillors are much older than the general population. Age, of course, might be considered a necessary attribute of a councillor in so far as it connotes wisdom or experience of social affairs. But less than a quarter of our male councillors are under the age of 45 and over a half are over 55. And in an activity so much concerned with the amelioration of family and social problems can the proportion of women councillors (only 12%) be considered satisfactory?

Despite their high average age two-thirds of all councillors are working a full week in a paid occupation. We find, however, that there are some occupational groups which are very over-represented on councils. Thirty-six per cent of all councillors are employers and managers in small businesses or farmers. This is four times the proportion in the general population. Forty-six per cent of all rural district councillors and 31% of county councillors are either small businessmen or farmers.

On the other hand, manual workers whether skilled or unskilled, are very under-represented amongst councillors. The county boroughs and the smaller urban authorities, however, have much larger proportions of manual workers than other authorities.

It is not the case that those with professional or managerial experience do not take up council work. Nineteen per cent of all councillors are either professional workers or employers and managers in large businesses. This is nearly three times the proportion of such groups in the general population and they are well represented in most types of council.

These differences in the occupation make-up of councils are echoed in the educational attainments of councillors and their incomes. In none of our governing bodies have we so far insisted on any educational qualification, but we find that, in general, councillors are better educated than electors and less well educated than M.P.s. The educational system has, however, been changing rapidly and the average age of our councillors is fairly high. So we find that older councillors were much less well educated than the younger. Nearly half of those over 55 finished their education at the elementary or secondary modern level but they also have larger proportions who have continued their education in either correspondence courses or evening classes. On the other hand these areas have smaller proportions of councillors with some form of higher education.

## *Chapter X*

Although councillors as a group have higher incomes than their electors, the county boroughs and smaller urban authorities have larger proportions of low income councillors than have the counties or the rural districts.

It is clear that the process whereby citizens become local government councillors is very selective, and selective in different ways in the different types of authority. Our system of government does not require that each social or economic group be represented by individuals who share its characteristics and some groups, because of education, training, or qualifications, might be expected to carry heavier responsibilities than others. But the special position of small businessmen or farmers in many councils would be hard to justify in this way and so would the variation in the proportions of councillors in the different occupations or with different educational levels from one type of council to another.

The situation summarised above results from the way the recruitment process in local government works on the social structure and social processes which prevail in Britain today.

It is sometimes suggested that because some groups of the population are more mobile than others they do not have the same opportunity or inclination to interest themselves in council work.

Sixty per cent of present councillors have lived in their areas more than 25 years. Attachment to their areas is especially strong amongst county borough and county councillors. It is certainly true that mobility is greater amongst professionals, the better educated, and the young. Nevertheless in the general population the majority of people in these categories had not, in the last ten years, moved out of their town of residence. If they were interested, mobility in the groups as a whole need not prevent many individuals in them taking part in council work.

Despite the high average age of councillors very large proportions have only short experience of council work. At the end of 1964, 48% of all councillors had first served on their council in 1958 or later. And many of those who had served three years or less on their council were over the age of 55.

In Britain our representative system is guaranteed by elections. How does this method work in the field of local government? Thirty-eight per cent of all councillors were returned unopposed, but 68% of rural district councillors were unopposed and, if we exclude these from the total 20% of all the rest were returned unopposed. The chances of fighting an election seem to fall off sharply once councillors have served ten years. Over 50% of all councillors who are small businessmen and farmers were returned unopposed. The proportion is much smaller for the other main occupational groups. Very large proportions of rural district councillors are small businessmen or farmers who have been returned unopposed.

Nearly half of all aldermen are over 65 and 15% are over 75. Length of service seems more important than any other consideration in their appointment.

### **Recruitment**

The present composition of councils results from an inflow through the recruitment processes and the outflow of councillors giving up the work. We look first at the process by which people become councillors and later at the way in which the work is given up.



It does not appear that family connections play a very large part, except perhaps in the rural districts. Councillors are much more likely to have had friends associated with council work before they themselves were appointed.

There are two main channels through which people are brought into council work. About half of all councillors were first brought into touch with council work in a formal way through their membership of organisations such as political parties and other bodies. This is especially important in the county boroughs and the former metropolitan boroughs. The other half were brought into touch in a more informal way through private connections or contacts with other councillors. This is of special importance in the counties and rural districts.

Political parties bring about a third of all councillors into touch with council work and ask them to stand. They bring in a large part of the younger councillors and manual workers who otherwise would be even less well represented on councils than they now are. Many of the other organisations, however, which play a role in bringing people into touch with council work, such as trade unions or religious, welfare or civic bodies, actually sponsor relatively few councillors. About 28% of councillors came into contact with council work through trade unions, religious and welfare groups but only about 10% were *invited to stand* by such bodies. On the other hand 35% of councillors were invited to stand by private people or in other informal ways. It is the employers and managers of small businesses and farmers who are most likely to be asked to stand in these informal ways.

The large part played by informal processes seems to indicate that the machinery for actually sponsoring candidates is rather inadequate. This must mean that many possible sources from which councillors might be drawn are not fully used. It must also affect the representativeness of local councils.

Councillors are rather pessimistic about the recruitment situation. Two-thirds of all councillors believe there is great difficulty in getting the 'right kind of candidate' to stand. When we asked what personal characteristics were necessary for a good councillor, nearly two-thirds of all councillors chose as the main necessary characteristic qualities which may be said to relate to character rather than to intellect or training.

Despite their feelings about the difficulty of recruitment, about three-quarters of all councillors in all types of area still think that the members of their council form a good cross-section of the people in the area.

### Characteristics and recruitment compared

When we look at the characteristics of sitting councillors and the ways in which they were brought into council work, we see that there is a tendency for some of these characteristics to go together. In Chapters I and II we summarised data on councillors in different council types, mainly in the form of indices made up by adding together related characteristics, such as educational level and income. The characteristics which make up these indices seem to occur to a greater or lesser extent in certain council types. Also, when we compare these indices with each other we see that there is a tendency for the council type which scores high on one index to score high on the others, and the same generally applies to low and intermediate scores.



and professionals with higher educational levels and larger incomes, to have entered council work when older, without fighting an election, and as non-political candidates. But they have an attachment to their areas second only to that of county borough councillors. Thus it seems that attachment to the area is not a factor which can be related directly to the other characteristics we have considered.

The municipal boroughs and urban districts have very close scores on all the indices and this was the basis for our decision to combine them for the purposes of the interview survey. They occupy an intermediate position in the indices. This leaves the former metropolitan districts, which had extreme scores on the indices, but not in the same direction. Thus they had the highest proportion of non-manual and manual worker councillors, the highest entering council work at a younger age in a contested election, and the highest having given much thought to standing. But they had the *lowest* proportion of councillors with low educational level and income and the lowest attachment to the area. These last two facts probably represent the mixed socio-economic backgrounds of these councillors and the spread of their attachments outside the boroughs in which they lived.

We were also able to gain information about the characteristics of councillors in various age groups. Although we have details of this information for 5 age groups, it will be simpler to show it for 3 groups so that comparisons can be made with the attitude questions which we analysed by only the 3 groups (Table 10.2).

TABLE 10.2  
Association of characteristics — by age

	Under 45	45-64	65 & over
	Rank	Rank	Rank
Non-manual and manual worker councillors .. ..	1	2 =	2 =
Index of lower educational level and income .. ..	3	2	1
Members of political parties .. ..	1	2	3
Index of degree of political involvement .. ..	1	2	3
Index of method of entry* .. ..	1	2	3
Index of high attachment to area .. ..	3	2	1

\* Includes having to fight an election when first served and for current term.

Younger councillors (under 45) were rather more likely than older ones to be non-manual and manual workers (50%) than older councillors were (39%).

The younger councillors were also more likely to have had to fight an election as political party candidates and to have given much thought to standing. On the other hand the younger councillors were less likely to have a lower educational level and income, and they were less attached to their areas.

The third main way in which we grouped councillors was by socio-economic status. The indices for these groups are shown in Table 10.3.

Educational level and income run down from the larger employers and professionals to the manual workers, but there are no such trends for the other indices. It is the non-manual and manual workers, who had most often a



### Recruitment—attitudes

How are councillors' attitudes to the problems of recruitment related to their own characteristics? In Chapter II we compiled an index of negative views on recruitment. We suggested that 'negative views' included believing that some sections of the people were not sufficiently represented, that there is difficulty in getting good candidates, and knowing suitable people who would not stand. In Table 10.4 this index is put alongside indices of degree of political interest and of method of entry.

TABLE 10.4  
Index of negative views on recruitment compared with index of degree of political interest and method of entry — by council type

	Counties	County boroughs	Metro-politan boroughs	Municipal boroughs & urban districts	Rural districts
	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Negative views on recruitment	3	2	5	1	4
Degree of political interest ..	4	2	1	3	5
Method of entry .. ..	4	2	1	3	5

There is not a complete positive correlation between the lines. In the metropolitan boroughs we see that councillors were relatively optimistic about recruitment and were also likely to have a high degree of political interest and high chances of having to fight an election. For the other four types of areas, however, a tendency does seem to emerge. The figures suggest that the harder the circumstances of councillors' own entry to the council the harder they think it is to get adequate representation by suitable candidates.

## PART 2: COUNCIL EXPERIENCE

### The way councillors spend their time

On average, councillors are spending about 52 hours per working month on their public activities. Just over half of this time goes on council meetings, attending committees, or on activities connected with committees. Less than a quarter of all councillors' public time is spent actually sitting in council or committee.

But there are very big differences between the time spent on their public duties by different kinds of councillor. Whilst on average something over 29 hours per working month are spent *on committee work*, over 40% of all councillors are spending less than 20 hours a month on this activity and about one-fifth are spending more than 40 hours a month. Nearly half of all county borough councillors are spending 40 hours or more per month.

It follows from this that, if changes in local government were to lead to more 'all purpose authorities', then *more* time would be needed from councillors on average, other things remaining the same. If, through changes in procedure, there was a reduction in council and committee meeting time, it would be



likely to be attended by those working away from the council area or those working full-time, whilst morning meetings are more likely to be attended by those working in the council area. It seems to follow that by setting the times for their meetings councillors are to some extent also deciding what kind of people attend them and also, perhaps, influencing to some extent interest in becoming a councillor.

We have looked at the way all committee time is distributed among different committees on all councils taken together. Housing takes up 18% of all committee time and 16% goes on Town and Country Planning. Over half of rural district council time goes on these two activities. In county councils over half goes on Health and Welfare and on Education. The proportion of all committee time spent on General Administration (including general purpose and staff) is greater in the smaller authorities than in the larger ones.

Forty-four per cent of the councillors' time, or about 23 hours a month, is spent away from committee work. About 7½ hours a month is spent on electors' problems but nearly half of all councillors spend less than five hours *a month* dealing with electors and their problems. There is a minority of 9%, however, who spend 20 hours or more per month dealing with electors.

Nearly a quarter of all the councillor's public time is spent with other organisations on which he represents the council or follows his own interests.

#### **How do councillors feel about the way they spend their time?**

We asked councillors' views on the way in which *their councils* were helping the public and we have related these opinions to councillors' feelings about their own *personal* effectiveness on committee. Whilst 28% thought Housing was their council's biggest field of public service, only 13% thought Housing was their own most effective field. On the other hand, whilst only 4% thought that the provision of amenities was their council's outstanding service, 13% thought their own most effective contribution was in this field. These discrepancies between what councillors feel about their own role and the work of their authorities are found in all types of authority and in groups of councillors with different characteristics. Forty-seven per cent of the younger councillors thought that Housing and Education were areas where their council had done most to help people, but only 13% of this group felt that these two committee activities had been their own most effective areas.

About 30% of all committee time was spent on activities where councillors felt they had, on balance, been most effective personally (Housing, Amenities, Trading and Public Utilities). Forty-two per cent of all committee time went on committees where, on balance, councillors felt they had been least effective personally (Highways and Roads, Finance, Town and Country Planning, and General Administration).

A majority, nevertheless, still felt they were on committees which interested them most or where they could do most good. Only 16% of all councillors would prefer to change some of their committees but 25% of the younger councillors said they would like to make such changes.

This information, from which we can discern discrepancies between the public and the private role of councillors, came from people who were still councillors, though some of them had rather short service. It must surely



population. Any reorganisation, then, would be likely to produce very different effects in these different groups, or bring in sections of the population whose motivations might not be the same as those which now induce people to become or stay councillors. And, presumably, if it were thought desirable to bring different groups of people into council work, then appeal would have to be made to a different balance of motivations and interests than those which operate at present.

Do councillors feel frustrated because of statutory or practical limitations on the powers of their authorities? Most councillors feel that their councils are now making full use of their powers and authority. Forty-three per cent, however, feel that more powers are needed, and 44% feel that the central government puts unnecessary limitations on councils. Councillors who were employers and managers in both small and large concerns, professionals and farmers were *less likely* than the other two groups of manual and non-manual workers to feel that more power was needed.

The limitations which irk councillors relate directly to the kinds of responsibility their authority carries. County councillors, for example, were more likely to be worried about limitations on their ability to deal with education than housing. Nearly two-thirds of all complaints made about county councils by urban and rural district councillors relate to planning controls.

Councillors' opinions on the powers of local authorities were related to their own range of social contacts. The more organisations they belonged to, the more likely they were to feel that full use was not made of existing powers, or that the central government limited the freedom of council unnecessarily. It seems that the wider the councillor's social contacts the more aware he becomes of problems and needs or, perhaps, the more subject he becomes to various group pressures for action.

### Attitudes towards change

Do councillors feel that councils do enough for people? A majority of all councillors felt that councils *are* now doing enough for people. But 45% of all, and over 60% of county borough and metropolitan borough councillors, thought that more should be done. The leading problems which it was thought would require a great deal of attention were Town Planning, Housing, Traffic Schemes and Public Utilities. Education was mentioned much more frequently, of course, by councillors in the county and county boroughs but in total came well down the list.

If more was to be done by councils how could time be found for it? Most councillors thought it would mean extra time, but 20% thought time could be found by changing existing procedures. But rather more councillors than this agreed that some specific proposals for change could provide some of the time needed. For example, 33% of all councillors and 43% of county borough councillors thought that time could be found if more detailed work were left to officials.

Councillors' response to particular suggestions showed a much greater willingness to consider change than appears on the surface. That is to say, whilst the overall sentiment appears to be somewhat conservative and against change there is a much greater positive response to particular concrete proposals.



number, as is shown in the Electors' survey report, take a leading part in various kinds of 'issue' organisations. Do these people represent a possible pool from which councillors might be recruited?

Councillors belong, on average, to between 6 and 7 organisations, and many councillors belong to a very large number. Political organisations or trade unions account for only a small part, and more than half of all memberships are of organisations concerned with educational, religious, welfare or leisure purposes. County councillors have more memberships than any other type of councillor, and are more likely to think of these interests *as part of the work* of a councillor, whilst other, and especially rural district, councillors are more likely to regard a large part of this time as a *private* rather than a public interest.

Membership of these other organisations seems to reach a peak around the age of 45-54 and is highest also amongst councillors with some form of further education.

Councillors of all types see more advantages than disadvantages in using voluntary organisations to meet new and developing needs. They have some particular services in mind as those for which voluntary organisations are most suitable. The most prominent are services for older people (especially 'meals on wheels'), youth clubs and services, recreational facilities, help for handicapped people (especially the blind), and medical auxiliary services.

It has been shown earlier that, whilst many councillors first came into touch with council work through voluntary organisations, only a few were actually asked by such bodies to stand for the council. If there were more formal connections between councils and those voluntary bodies whose work complements that of the council, would this make recruitment easier than it is at present? Could such a development in the course of time provide more of the formal channels of recruitment which seem at present to be lacking?

### Party politics

What part does party politics play in local government? How essential is it to the system which now operates?

Two-thirds of all councillors are members of political organisations, but the proportion varies greatly from 95% of county borough councillors to about half that proportion in the rural districts. Many fewer councillors than this, however, had actually been brought into council work by political bodies and 12% of those who are now members joined *after* or about the time they joined the council.

In county boroughs and the former metropolitan boroughs nearly all councillors can be described as 'party political'. In the rural districts, on the other hand, over 70% said they were 'independent' or not attached to any formally organised majority or main opposition group. Nearly two-thirds of the smaller employers and farmers describe themselves as 'independent'. Only 10% of the manual worker councillors do so, whilst 87% say they are members of the majority or main opposition group in council.

Do councillors think that party support is essential for election to local councils? Councillors are divided almost half and half on this question. The proportion thinking such support was necessary was of course directly related

farmers had the largest majority against it (81%). Detailed analysis of results seems to suggest that, as a group, the councillors who think party politics essential are likely to be the keener members of councils.

To judge from the views expressed by councillors themselves, party politics plays a much smaller part in local government than is widely assumed. These views are supported by those of ex-councillors who no longer have the same commitments. Most of the critical comment on the role of party politics in local government ignores the important role played by political parties in recruiting councillors. Without them local government councillors would be more unrepresentative than they now are.

That councillors on the whole say that party politics do not greatly affect the actual work of council is less surprising than might at first sight appear. In very many councils and particularly in the numerous rural district councils the work is not organised on lines usual in national politics and it is therefore natural for many councillors in such areas to believe that council work would be better done without party politics. Many of those councillors who are most opposed to party politics put in much *less* time on council work, or with associated voluntary organisations, or even with their electors, than councillors who think that party politics are essential.

Only a few councillors think that party politics dissuades many likely candidates from standing, or that it plays more than a minor role in any dissatisfaction that councillors now feel with the work. Even so, if rural districts are excluded, about one-half of all other councillors feel that local government work could be done better without party politics. County borough councillors, however, are much more likely than others to think that party politics are essential.

In Chapter VII we made use of an index of favourable attitude to party politics. By placing this index against certain others it is possible to see to what extent political attitude is accompanied by other attitudes or characteristics (Table 10.5). The proportion of councillors in any council type who were asked to stand by a political party may be taken as an index of the degree to which that council type is 'political'. The relationship between 'political' councils and spending much time on council work appears to be a fairly close one, with the exception of the metropolitan boroughs. The 'political' council types are also those with the highest degree of interest in change in council work, or 'activism'. Finally, there appears to be no direct association between political attitude and turnover rate.

TABLE 10.5  
Index of favourable attitude to party politics compared with other indices —  
by council type

	Counties	County boroughs	Metro-politan boroughs	Municipal boroughs & urban districts	Rural districts
	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Index of favourable attitude to party politics .. .. .	3	1	2	4	5
Proportion asked to stand by political party .. .. .	4	2	1	3	5
All time spent as a councillor ..	2	1	4	3	5
Index of interest in change in council work ('activism') ..	4	1	2	3	5
Turnover rate .. .. .	5	4	1	2	3



public. Special organisations set up to provide electors with the opportunity to ask for help or make known their grievances make only a very small contribution to councillors' knowledge of public needs. There is a proportion of councillors who, either on a personal basis or through addressing groups and associations, make some kind of contact with many hundreds of electors a year and this proportion of highly active councillors raises the average number of contacts for all councillors to a much higher level than it would otherwise reach. *Nearly one-third* of all councillors, however, had personal contact with four or fewer electors during the four weeks before the interview or *less than one a week*. Only 17% of electors had *ever* met a councillor, and not more than 6% said they had done so during the last year.

In view of these limited contacts and the obvious gaps on both sides of the democratic equation, it is not surprising that very many councillors *and* electors feel that electors neither know enough to make full use of council services nor to form a balanced picture of what councils are doing. Eighty per cent of councillors felt that electors did not know enough to form a balanced view of councils' activities. Despite this ignorance, a majority of both councillors and electors nevertheless believed that effective participation in local elections was possible. Younger councillors, and those with some form of further education, were more likely than others to believe that 'the public does not know enough'.

We asked councillors what they thought could be done to raise the level of public interest. Nearly a fifth could not think of anything useful which could be done but about a third thought that what was needed was better public relations, publicity or coverage by press and television, and another 12% publicity organised by councillors themselves.

It is very clear from this information that much better communication between councils, councillors, and electors is essential if public interest in local government is to reach higher levels. This is necessary both for the assurance and support it will give councillors and because it will then be more possible for the whole system to fulfil the purpose for which it exists.

### Aspects of council experience compared

The chapters reviewed in parts 2 and 3 above include data on various aspects of the work of a councillor. In the section on the way councillors spend their public time we saw that certain types of councillor tend to spend more time and generally to be more involved in the work than others. These results may be compared with the degree to which councillors are active in non-council organisations, or have contact with electors (Table 10.6).

Once again, two types of council—the county boroughs and the rural districts—are at either end of the scale. The county boroughs are highest (or second highest) in spending time on all council work, number of committee memberships, being involved in non-council organisations, and having contact with electors. The rural district councils are consistently low in these items. The metropolitan borough councillors scored second lowest on these items.

There is not such a clear trend in these factors in working experience for

At this point we may consider what might be the consequences for the *quantity* of work per councillor if more councillors of certain types were to be brought in. There is nothing we can say about the *quality* or efficiency of the work done, for reasons stated earlier in this report. If changes were made in recruitment policies and conditions which encouraged more younger people to become councillors the indication is that less time would be spent on council work. This may be partly explained by older councillors being on more committees, but the younger councillors also spend less time on non-committee aspects of council work. The reasons for this may include the responsibilities of early family life and of making a career, together with the fact that retired people have more time to spare for council work.

It is sometimes suggested that employers, managers and professional people, who generally have higher levels of education and qualifications, make more efficient councillors. But our data suggest that bringing more of these people into council work (and it must be remembered that they are already heavily over-represented in proportion to their numbers among the electorate) would not be likely to add to the total time spent on council work nor to the amount of contact with electors. On the other hand, the fact that some councillors spend a lot of time on their public work does not necessarily mean that they do the work most effectively. A *reduction* in the proportion of small employers and farmers would be likely to *increase* the number of councillors who are willing to spend much time on contact with electors and on all forms of council activity.

### Attitudes to council experience compared

The councillor's attitude to his public work has three broad aspects: (a) his own satisfaction with the work, (b) his concern with changes which might be made, either in the way the work is done or its scope, and (c) his idea of the kind of reception the public gives to the work of his council or of councils generally. In Chapter III we gave an index of attitude to committee work, in which a high score indicated a preference to change some committee memberships, a feeling that there was not enough time for all aspects of the work and that some groups or individuals had too much power. In Chapter V there was an index of interest in change in procedures and in widening the scope of the work. The kind of people who scored high on this might be called activists in council work. Very small proportions of councillors thought the public had an unfavourable view of their work, but many thought the public was not interested—and variations in these proportions may be taken as an indication of the councillors' idea of how the public regards their work. Finally we believe that the index of satisfaction with council work in relation to occupation, although it appears to be a fairly restricted comparison, is a good indicator of the amount of *general* satisfaction a councillor feels with his public service.

In Table 10.9 these indices for the types of council are brought together. In the rural districts there is least concern with changing the details or scope of council work. However, rural district councillors are *least* likely to believe that the public is not interested in their work. As we noted in Chapter VIII, this may be because many rural councillors are to some extent out of touch with the electorate—they spend below average time on dealing with electors and do



## Conclusions

The manual worker councillors, who spend the most time on their council work, are more likely than other socio-economic groups to accept the need for changes in their committee arrangements, but are less keen on reforms designed to find more time for council work and less inclined to feel that the public is not interested in their work (Table 10.11). The smaller employers, managers, and farmers, are least likely to want change and are more optimistic about the public's interest in their work.

TABLE 10.11  
Attitudes to working experience—by socio-economic group

	Employers and managers with 25 or more subordinates and professionals	Employers and managers with under 25 subordinates and farmers	Non-manual & own account non-professionals	Manual and agricultural workers
	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Index of positive attitude to committee changes .. .. .	3	4	2	1
Index of interest in change in council work ('activism') .. .. .	1	4	2	3
Believe public is not interested in work of council .. .. .	3	2	1	4
Index of satisfaction with council work in relation to occupation .. .. .	4	3	2	1

If more councillors with certain characteristics were brought into council work how would this be likely to affect the balance of opinion? This question can only be answered on the assumption that new councillors would tend to feel the same about their working experience as members of the same kind of groups who are now on the council. Bringing in more younger councillors would probably tend to increase the dissatisfaction with the present distribution of committee memberships among councillors, with the lack of time available for the work, and with the power which some individuals or groups have. Younger councillors are keener activists, but they are not more put off than the average with the amount of time spent on party debate.

The relatively few manual workers on councils at present may be a very special section of all manual workers. If more were brought in perhaps they would differ in some respects from those now serving. However, it is reasonable to suppose that they would be more like sitting manual worker councillors in their opinions than like sitting professional councillors, for example. If more manual workers were to become councillors, they might tend to be willing to spend more time or to take a somewhat more positive attitude to the role of party politics in local government. More manual worker councillors would also probably raise the general level of personal satisfaction derived from the work. On the other hand, a large representation of employers, managers and professionals might result in stronger pressure to change council procedures and less willingness to spend as much time as many other councillors now spend.

prepared for it and had taken less trouble than others to equip themselves for it. For one reason or another many people become councillors who do not have close acquaintance with the work and the realities quickly prove to be very different from their expectations and their capabilities. These people contributed disproportionately to the turnover rate. They are very likely to be under the age of 45.

About one-third of ex-councillors said they had given up because of ill-health or old age, and another third because of the time involved or, what might amount to the same thing, financial, business or domestic reasons. In contrast to those two-thirds who had given up because of such personal circumstances 8% said they had given up because of frustrations with the party system and 13% because of other aspects of the organisation of local government work; 21%, that is to say, were frustrated with 'the system'.

If we consider only those ex-councillors who are under 65 'the time involved' and 'family/business' reasons account for 40% of those leaving. These reasons probably account for as many as one-half of ex-councillors under the age of 45.

'Party politics' and other frustrations arising out of the organisation of local government (mainly the latter) account for more than one-third of ex-councillors who have served 3 years or less. This group is more likely to have been unprepared for council work, and many in it must find rather quickly that they cannot cope with the actual conditions of council participation. Another one in six of these short service councillors gives up the work because of moving out of the district.

The better-educated councillors were more likely to give as their reasons for leaving the council 'the time involved', frustrations with either party politics or other aspects of the organisation of local government or that they had moved from the district. Those with least education were more likely to give ill-health or age or business and domestic reasons.

Whilst a two-thirds majority of both councillors and ex-councillors thought they had been able to spend as much time as needed on all aspects of council work, the short service and younger ex-councillors were more likely to think that not enough time had been available. They were similarly less likely to think that proper weight had been given to all points of view in council deliberations. These groups (and to a large extent they overlap) were, then, more unhappy about their council experience. They form a substantial proportion of those ex-councillors who gave up the work for reasons other than illness or old age.

Perhaps the newer councillors had been too impatient to acquire the necessary knowledge or, alternatively, perhaps procedures for integrating new councillors into council work are not sufficiently developed to ensure that the young or inexperienced can work their way gradually into it.

We find some differences between what former and sitting councillors said about the satisfactions and frustrations of council work. Fewer ex-councillors seem to have got satisfaction from specific council activities. They were more likely than sitting councillors to express rather general satisfaction with 'co-operating with other councillors' or 'helping others'. When asked about their frustrations they were more likely than sitting councillors to talk about



## Conclusions

party loyalties. They help to explain why it is that, although many ex-councillors agree with many councillors that the work of local government could be better done without party politics, only a small proportion (14%) cited party politics as their reason for giving up the work. It was not for them the *major* irritant or cause for dissatisfaction.

Ex-councillors were much *less* likely than sitting councillors to believe that the public took a favourable view of the work of councils or of councillors. On the whole neither group believes that the public knows enough even to make proper use of council services, and they both feel this ignorance arises very largely out of lack of interest.

Does this feeling of public disinterest persuade people to give up council work? Insignificant numbers of ex-councillors cited public disinterest as their main reason for giving up, or mentioned it amongst the causes of frustration with the work, and yet it seems unlikely that willingness to give up private time in the public interest should not be affected by a felt lack of public interest. But we have shown in earlier chapters that, no matter what may be their views on the public, large proportions of all councillors, whatever their background or description are putting in very long hours on council work and the overall 'turnover' rate does not seem remarkably high. How do councillors themselves rank the various factors which we have been examining as possible deterrents to continuing council work?

Both councillors and ex-councillors rank 'the most serious problem' for local government in broadly the same way. Both think 'getting enough good people to stand' is the most serious problem and the time involved the next most serious. Public ignorance ranks third for sitting councillors but ex-councillors put party politics third. Younger ex-councillors rank 'time involved' somewhat lower than the older ones, and they also rank party politics much lower as a problem. They rank public ignorance higher.

When asked what was most important in discouraging potential candidates, both sitting and ex-councillors ranked 'time involved' highest. The effects on income or occupation were next most important but mentioned by smaller proportions. Party politics came next on the list for ex-councillors though only fourth for sitting councillors. The order, then, is:

### What discourages people from standing?

	Ex-councillors	Councillors
	%	%
Time involved	39	41
Effect on income	13	18
Party politics	12	7
Public ignorance	9	9
Bad public image	5	5

### Aspects of the decision to stay

If we want to find out what kinds of councillor are likely to stay in public work, we need to get answers to a number of related questions: (a) a relevant one which has already been considered as a factor in working experience and may now be considered as a factor in staying or leaving is that of personal

the work, most frequently intend to remain, and actually do remain. The opposite applies to the larger employers, managers and professionals. Except for a slight tendency for the smaller employers and farmers to stay on longer, the non-manual workers occupy second position behind the manual workers.

TABLE 10.14  
Aspects of the decision to stay — by socio-economic group

	Employers and managers with 25 or more subordinates and professionals	Employers and managers with under 25 subordinates and farmers	Non-manual & own account non-professionals	Manual and agricultural workers
	Rank	Rank	Rank	Rank
Index of satisfaction with council work in relation to occupation .. .. .	4	3	2	1
Intend to remain for a long while .. .. .	4	3	2	1
'Staying rate' .. .. .	4	3	3	1

What are the implications of these findings for encouraging councillors to stay in the work? It seems that council work is found to be most satisfying at middle age and, as suggested in Chapter IV, this may be partly due to a tendency for interest to turn away from occupational life and family responsibilities at this time of life. If councillors can be recruited young and can successfully surmount the difficulties, both in their own circumstances and their council experience, which arise during their early years of service, they are likely to remain for quite a long time. But, as indicated earlier, this may require that the realities and possibilities of council work be better known *before* they become councillors. It may also require more deliberate measures to help the younger councillor work his way into the procedures and conventions of council work during his first few years of office. At present disproportionate numbers of younger councillors leave after only short service, and this wastage is one that local government can ill afford.



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